

“IT'S ONE TO GO, BUT ANOTHER TO COME.”

(A Story of Two Little Cloaks.)

BY CHARLES T. JEROME.

THREE was a little Blue Cloak, and a little boy whom I used to know very well was often inside of it.

There was a little Brown Cloak, and inside of that there was often another little boy whom I used to know.

And there was a great beautiful chestnut forest across the brook that these Two Little Cloaks had watched week after week ; had watched and waited for the burrs to open and the nuts to fall. And now a nipping frost had opened the burrs, the nuts had fallen and were to be had for the gathering, and so the Two Cloaks, with the two boys with two baskets, were seen one bright morning going towards the forest.

The Little Cloaks fluttered in expectation, the baskets also swung in anticipation, while the boys ran and laughed and shouted in very fullness of hope and joy.

Now, this is all very agreeable and pleasant, and we all wish the little fellows their baskets full and a safe return, and much enjoyment as they sit by the fire and eat their nuts in the succeeding winter evenings ; and doubtless it would all have turned out just so, and there would have been nothing remarkable about it, except for a little thread of a brook — a very muddy and dirty thread it was, about *so* wide, and that's a little wider than you can reach with both arms extended, that ran across their way.

I say this brook ran right across the way of the Two Little Cloaks, and it was about as muddy a brook as mud could make it. Right across the muddiest part some one had bridged it with a slender rail, so slender that it trembled and shook fearfully with one's weight.

Now, as to jumping across, that was out of the question, for it was a good jump for a grown man, and a big jump for a large boy, and it was about as much as our Two Small Cloaks could have done to

jump across if they could have put two jumps into one — which of course they couldn't do. So what was left for them but to turn back and give up the nutting and go home, or to go across on this slender, trembling rail ?

Now, who, with the pleasure of nutting before, was ever known to think for a moment of going back and giving up for any obstacle so trifling as a brook, even a very muddy one ?

My Little Adventurers certainly had no such thought.

And now I think I see them just as they looked then, for it was many years ago. The little Blue Cloak flutters, the little feet waver, and slip and stagger, the steps are uncertain and faltering, but they carry the little boy inside the cloak over, and with a laugh he steps on the other side.

And now, little Brown Cloak ! it is your turn !

The little feet step tremblingly on the tottering rail, another insecure step, and another, and another, and then — arms are stretched wildly out, but there is too much drapery for successful balancing ; the Blue Cloak on shore is laughing uncontrollably ; the Brown Cloak *not on shore* is floundering helplessly, wretchedly, not at all laughingly, at full length, and flat as any other flounder, in mud and water ; and then, after infinite floundering and struggling I see Two Little Cloaks, one of them still brown, but a *very muddy brown*, — a very dirty and wet and drizzling and uncomfortable brown, trudging in a ludicrously melancholy way homeward, and two empty baskets that mean more than well-filled baskets could possibly mean.

The Witch in the Play must have put the words into my mouth which I have since often had occasion to verify. They are weird or ludicrous as we apply them, and quite true whether applied to nutting expeditions or to the weightier affairs of life ; and they are these :

“It's one to go, but another to come.”